FEMA

HSEEP Toolkit System: User Guide
NEXS System Basics

Contents

Summary

The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) Toolkit is a key component of HSEEP's overall strategy regarding the creation and ongoing support of self-sustaining exercise programs at the State and local levels. The Toolkit integrates exercise design, scheduling, development, evaluation, and improvement planning. These tools provide a collaborative environment on both the exercise program and project management levels.

The specific elements of the HSEEP Toolkit include the National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) system, the Design and Development System (DDS), the Master Scenario Event List (MSEL) Builder, the Exercise Evaluation Guide (EEG) Builder, and the Corrective Action Program (CAP) system.

For more information on the HSEEP program visit the HSEEP Web site at https://hseep.dhs.gov/.

The United States conducts several exercises each year; these exercises often require the collective participation of Federal, State, and local personnel and the use of additional resources. To facilitate collaboration and coordination, the National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) was created. The automated version of the NEXS, the NEXS System collects basic exercise information such as exercise name, location, date, target capabilities, participants, etc. The NEXS System coordinates Homeland Security exercises through synchronization and deconfliction to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. The NEXS also serves as a management tool for exercise planning and enables visibility into exercises for planners and leadership.

Purpose

The "NEXS System Basics" user guide is designed to help get you started using the NEXS System. Logging into the system and creating an exercise are covered in a separate user guide, "HSEEP Toolkit System User Guide: Login and Exercise Creation Basics." This document covers the steps needed to interact with the system but does not include guidance on HSEEP policy, definitions or a suggested methodology for describing exercise data.

Specific topics include:
- The basic user roles and responsibilities
- How to schedule an exercise
- How to interact with the NEXS Calendar
- How to synchronize and deconflict an exercise
- How to create and view reports

Other Resources

HSEEP Volumes
HSEEP Web site: About HSEEP section
HSEEP Toolkit Help file
HSEEP Toolkit System User Guide: Login and Exercise Creation Basics

1) NEXS System User Roles and Responsibilities

The NEXS system is concerned with exercises that are destined or should be included on the NEXS calendar. All exercises on the NEXS calendar are associated or attached to a Scheduling Domain, which is a jurisdiction or an area of responsibility. The domain could be a Federal agency (the CDC), a region (FEMA Region III), or a State (Virginia, Michigan, Minnesota, etc.).

Two main roles comprise the NEXS system: the Exercise Administrative Authority (EAA) and the Scheduler. Below is an overview of how each of these roles functions within the NEXS system.

EAA:

The role of the EAA is fairly broad. EAAs have authority over exercises, organizations, and users within their area of responsibility or scheduling domain. EAAs can create, modify and delete exercises, organizations, and users in the NEXS system, or designate additional users (Schedulers) to work on their behalf. EAAs have visibility into any exercises that have been submitted or approved on the calendar within the purview of their scheduling domain. EAAs can see all approved exercises on the calendar, but have detailed level access only to those that are submitted, approved, and associated with their domain. The EAA, however, is the only one who can approve an exercise for inclusion on the NEXS Calendar.

Scheduler:

The Scheduler assists the EAA. The EAA will designate certain users as Schedulers in their scheduling domain. Schedulers can recommend adding new schedulers to a domain, but they must be approved by the EAA. Schedulers can create new exercises and modify or delete any exercise they have created. Once an exercise is created, the Scheduler submits it for the EAA's approval. Only Schedulers and EAAs can submit exercises to the National Calendar. Like EAAs, Schedulers can view the details for any submitted or approved exercise within their scheduling domain.

2) Request Access to Become an Exercise Scheduler*

Scheduler access is required only for users who need to submit their exercise for approval and subsequent inclusion on the NEXS calendar. All HSEEP users are granted:

- View-only access to the NEXS calendar
- The ability to deconflict and synchronize exercises
- Access to reports

To become an exercise scheduler for a domain, follow the following steps:

a) After you have logged into the HSEEP Toolkit, select NEXS System from the Welcome page. This will take you to the NEXS System/DDS Homepage, which displays system messages and your list of exercises in the HSEEP Toolkit.

b) From the NEXS/DDS homepage, click on the Resources button in the upper right corner, and select the option to Request NEXS Access.

c) On the Request NEXS Access page, use the drop-down menu selector to select the Scheduling Domain for which you require scheduling rights. In the Scheduling Domain text box below, include a short message. This message will be included in the automatically generated e-mail to the EAA notifying them that you have requested to become a Scheduler for their Scheduling Domain.

d) The EAA for the Scheduling Domain will review your request, and, if appropriate, add you as a Scheduler.

3) How to Submit an Exercise to the National Calendar*

After you have created an exercise, if you are a Scheduler or an EAA, you can submit the exercise to a specific Scheduling Domain for inclusion on the National Exercise Schedule.

a) From the NEXS/DDS homepage, select the exercise you would like to submit to the National Calendar. This will display the summary page.

b) From the summary page, click the Submit to NEXS button.

c) This will display a page that lists the scheduling domains to which you have scheduling privileges, as well as any messages from the EAA regarding scheduling requirements.

d) Select the radio button next to the Scheduling Domain for this exercise. Then press the Submit button at the bottom of the page. Back on the summary page, you will notice that the status of the exercise has changed from "pending" to "submitted." The status is listed on the summary page, as well as on the NEXS/DDS homepage.

e) The EAA for the Scheduling Domain will then review the exercise. If the exercise is ready to go, then the EAA will approve it, and the status will change from "submitted" to "approved." If there is a problem with the exercise, and the EAA declines the exercises, the status will change from "submitted" back to "pending," and the lead planner for that exercise will receive an automatically generated e-mail with additional information from the EAA.

4) The NEXS Calendar

The NEXS System Calendar contains exercises from each of the Scheduling Domains.   The calendar comes directly from latest data published to the NEXS System and may not necessarily reflect the current 5-year National Exercise program (NEP) Schedule as approved by the PTEE PCC.

Access the calendar.

To access the calendar, login to the HSEEP Toolkit System and select NEXS from the Welcome page. In the top menu bar, select NEXS Calendar. This will bring up a calendar view of the National Exercise Schedule. There are many features on the calendar available to refine the information displayed.

Items Displayed on the Calendar.

The calendar lists exercises, events, and scheduling flags, as noted by the legend:
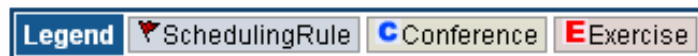
The "**E**" notation indicates that an exercise is being conducted on that day.
The "**C**" indicates that an exercise conference is being held on that day.
The "" is a scheduling flag. Scheduling flags are displayed to indicate that care should be taken when scheduling an exercise on that day.
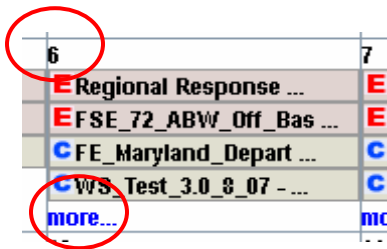
Each "day" box of the calendar lists the scheduling rules, conferences, and exercises for that day. The conferences and exercises are links to a summary page for the associated exercise. Click on the exercise name to go to the summary page for that exercise.
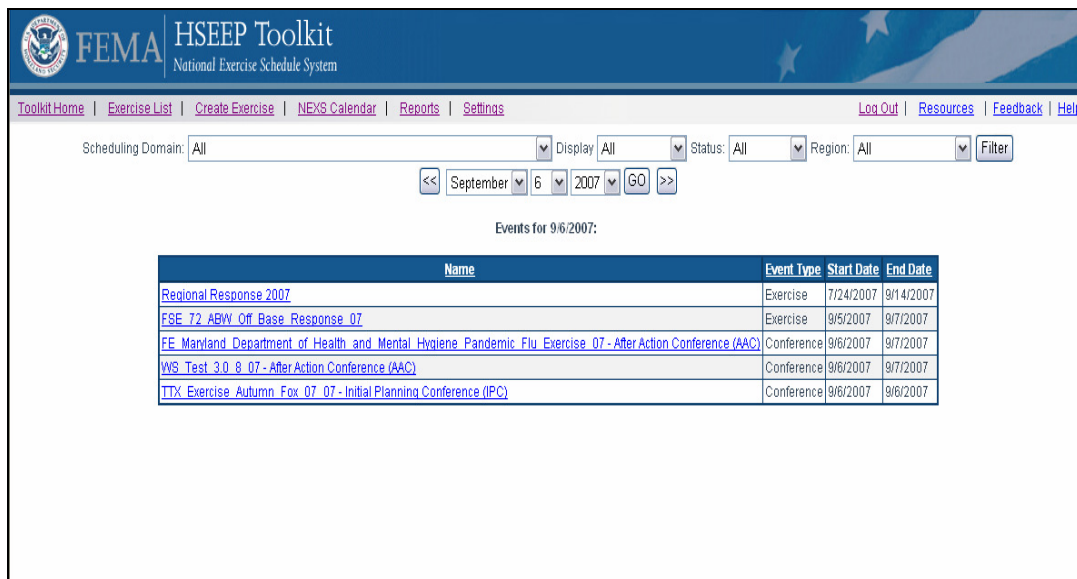
View a Single Day.

Sometimes, there is too much information on a single day to view properly on the month view. There are two ways to access the Day view. You can select the day number or the "**more...**" link.

This lets you view one day's worth of exercises and conferences. The full name of the exercise is listed on the day view. There are also filters on the day view that will limit the amount of information displayed. Reference the section "Calendar Filters" for more information on the filters.

Calendar Filters.

The NEXS System Calendar has several filters available to narrow the scope of information displayed on the calendar. These filters include:

- Scheduling Domain
- Display (e.g., Conference, Exercise Conduct, All)
- Status (e.g., Pending, Submitted, Approved, All)
- Region (e.g., the FEMA Regions)

Use the filters to narrow the scope of what is displayed on the calendar. For example, by selecting the Scheduling Domain filter and selecting "Virginia," the calendar will only show exercises that are associated with the Virginia Scheduling Domain.

To change a filter, use the drop-down selection box to select the appropriate option. When the desired filters have been selected, click the "Filter" button on the far right side.

5) Synchronization and Deconfliction

One of the goals of the NEXS System is to identify prospective opportunities where exercises can be synchronized or deconflicted as early in the planning phase as possible. This will allow DHS and other agencies save significant time, money, and resources by integrating and prioritizing preparedness efforts. To facilitate this, the NEXS System provides a method to search for areas of overlap between exercises in areas such as location, conduct date, participants, and specified Target Capabilities.

The synchronization and deconfliction feature is performed against exercises approved for the National Exercise Schedule. The user can search for synchronization and deconfliction opportunities during any phase of exercise creation and inclusion on the calendar.

To deconflict an exercise or search for synchronization opportunities, complete the following steps.

a) Log in to the HSEEP Toolkit and select the NEXS or DDS button to navigate to the NEXS/DDS Homepage where your exercises are listed.

b) Select the exercise to deconflict by clicking on its name. This will bring up the exercise summary page.

c) Along the right side, under the National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) System heading, is a button called "View Scheduling Conflicts."

d) Select View Scheduling Conflicts. This takes you to the Deconfliction page, which lists potential exercise conflicts, synchronization opportunities, and conflicts with the established scheduling rules.

From the Deconfliction page you can review where overlap occurs. For example, your exercise may occur within 20 days of another that is located within 50 miles and has three shared participants. You can view that exercise's summary information by selecting that exercise.

6) Linking an Exercise

Exercises can be linked together to note that they are related in some fashion. Perhaps they are part of a coordinated set of exercises or are related in subject matter, dates, or type. This function allows synchronization of exercises. Linking two exercises adds a link at the bottom of each summary page to the other exercise. The

link enables schedulers, creators, and EAAs to easily access and view the summary page information. If the lead planners, schedulers, and EAAs decide that it is not appropriate to link the exercise, that link can be removed by those with modify rights to the exercise.

To link an exercise to another, complete the following steps.

a) Log in to the HSEEP Toolkit and select the NEXS or DDS button to navigate to the combined NEXS/DDS Homepage where your exercises are listed.

b) Navigate to the summary page of any exercise where you think a link is appropriate. Selecting the target exercise can be done via the Calendar page, the Deconfliction page, etc.

c) On the summary page, on the right side under the heading, "National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) System" is a button called "Link Exercise." Select that option to bring up the Link Exercise page.

d) On the Link Exercise page, all of the exercises to which you are associated are listed. Select the exercise you would like to link by selecting the "Link Exercise" option.

e) Note that summary page for your exercise now shows the link to the selected exercise, along with an option to Remove Link.

f) Similarly, the summary page for the other exercise now shows a link to your exercise, also with an option to Remove Link.

7) Create and View Reports

To create and view reports derived from NEXS system data, follow these steps.

a) Log in to the HSEEP Toolkit and select the NEXS or DDS button to navigate to the combined NEXS/DDS Homepage where your exercises are listed.

b) Navigate to the Reports page by selecting the Reports option in the upper menu bar.

The Reports page lists several pre-defined reports, such as the Comprehensive Three Month Report, the Comprehensive One Year Report, and The Executive Summary National Level Report. The Exercise versions of the report contain only exercise conduct information, while the Event version of the report contains both exercise conduct and conference information. Each of these reports can be viewed as html, excel, pdf, or plotted on a map.

Five-Year NEP Report.

The approved version of the Five-Year NEP Report is also accessed from the Reports page. Select the Five Year NEP Report button to navigate to the page with the current version of that report.
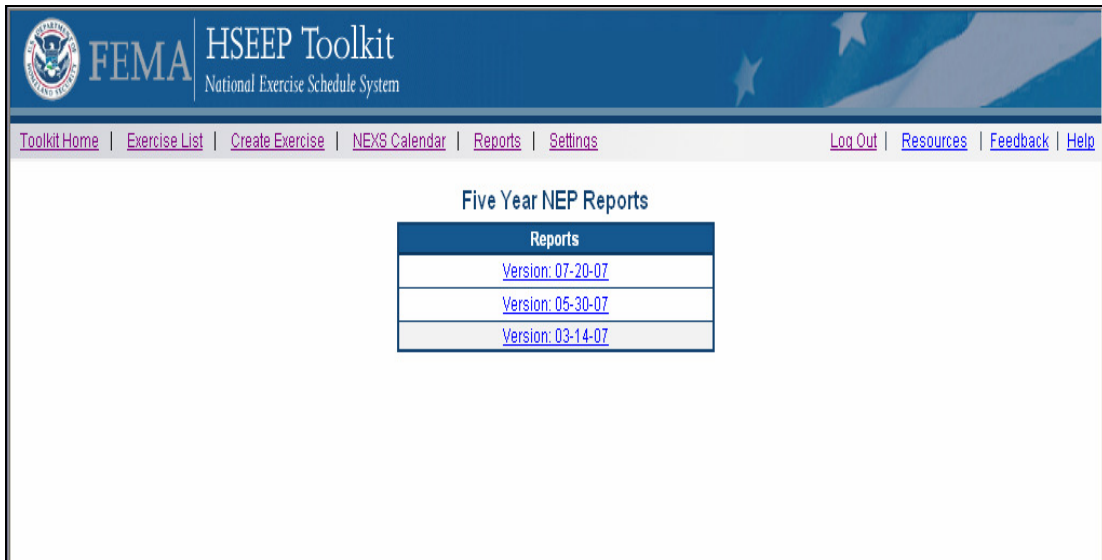
Links to the current and previous versions of the Five-Year NEP Report are listed on this page. They are stored as PowerPoint files. The topmost link is the current version. Select the link of any of the reports to view the document.

Custom Reports.

Another feature of the NEXS reporting tool is a custom report generator. This tool gives the user more control over the selection criteria used to generate a report. Select the "Create Custom Report" option in the lower left hand corner of the NEXS Reports page to navigate to the Custom Report page.

8) Request and/or Set the Exercise Tier

a) Log in to the HSEEP Toolkit. Once you have logged in, the first screen you see is the "Welcome" page.

b) Select the NEXS or DDS button to navigate to the combined "NEXS/DDS Homepage."

c) On the summary page, on the right hand side, under the heading, "National Exercise Schedule (NEXS) System" is a button called, "Set Exercise Tiers." Select that option to bring up the "Link Exercise" page.

d) Users can request that their exercise be designated as any Tier, or request that a Tier designation be removed. Tier III exercises can be designated by interagency EAAs and Tier IV exercises can be designated by State EAAs.

9) Manage Organizations

a) Log in to the HSEEP Toolkit. Once you have logged in, the first screen you see is the "Welcome" page.

b) Select the NEXS or DDS button to navigate to the combined "NEXS/DDS Homepage."

c) From the Homepage toolbar, choose the "Settings" tab.

d) Under the System Settings section click the **"**Manage Organizations" link

e) This page will then provide the user with a truncated list of all Organizations within the HSEEP Toolkit.

f) From this page, the user will then have the ability to request that an Organization be added to the list by clicking the "Add Organization" link.
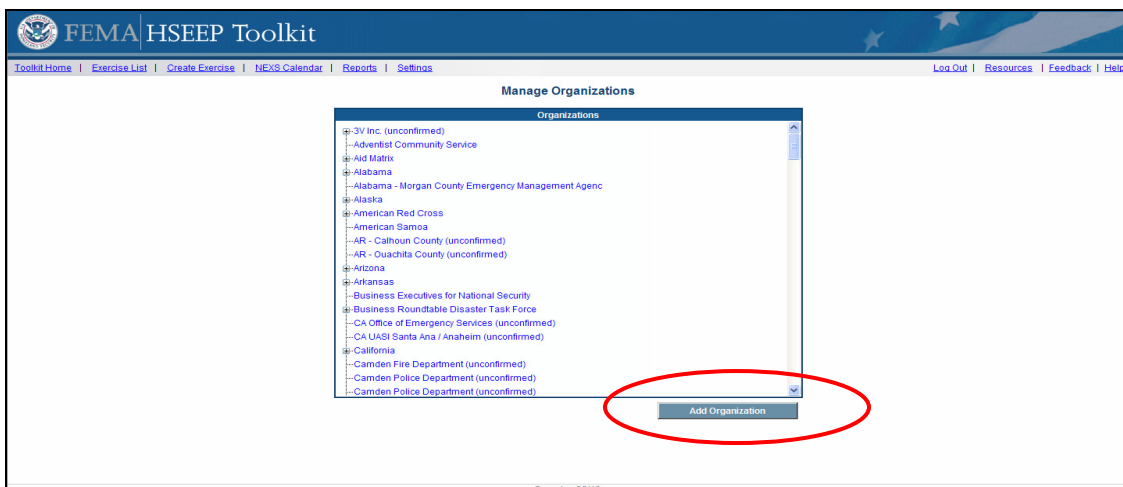
g) The user will then enter the information for their Organization. Once added, the Organization will be available for all exercises, but will be considered "unconfirmed" until an EAA for the Parent Organization validates it.

Reference "HSEEP Toolkit System User Guide: Login and Exercise Creation Basics" for assistance with logging into the HSEEP Toolkit and creating an exercise.
Note: The specific buttons shown depend on what role you have and your level of access to that exercise.